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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 1 November 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Almahmoud (Vice-Chair) ..... (United Arab Emirates)

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In the absence of Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), Mr. Almahmoud (United Arab Emirates), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.09 a.m.

Agenda item 50: Assistance in mine action (A/72/226 and A/C.4/72/L.12)

1. **Mr. Zouev** (Assistant Secretary-General for the Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Department of Peacekeeping Operations) said that the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IAG-MA) worked with other humanitarian coordination mechanisms such as the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) to improve coherence in mine action and enhance its impact. In line with the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to improve synergies between the various pillars of the United Nations, mine action had been included as a core component of international efforts pertaining to humanitarian emergencies, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, conflict prevention, human rights and development.

2. The year 2017 marked 20 years since the adoption of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (hereafter Mine Ban Convention), the creation of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and the launch of the IAG-MA. During that time, significant progress had been made as a result of effective partnerships among Member States, the United Nations, civil society and the private sector. Notably, the Convention had grown to encompass a total of 162 States Parties; over 51 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines had been destroyed; 30 States Parties had completed their clearance obligations; and the number of casualties caused by anti-personnel mines had dropped dramatically, particularly in Colombia and Afghanistan.

3. He expressed appreciation for the global leadership, innovation and creativity of UNMAS and its key role in increasing global adherence to mine action standards and adapting them to the evolving methods and devices used by the parties to conflicts, including through its recent update of the United Nations Policy on Victim Assistance in Mine Action and its ongoing update of the International Mine Action Standards. The systematic personalization of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security had also contributed to progress, and United Nations mine action programmes were achieving high levels of adherence to the Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes as the number of women employed by the mine action sector continued to increase.

4. Despite those advances, however, further international efforts were needed to assist communities affected by conflict; coordination and partnerships were key to ensuring the effectiveness of those efforts. He noted with satisfaction the draft resolution's reference to humanitarian clearance of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in view of the increasing shift to urban warfare in modern conflicts, and emphasized that mine action played a critical role in enabling humanitarian action, building peace, and promoting implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

5. The United Nations had achieved remarkable results through its mine action programmes, including clearing mines from contaminated land; removing explosive hazards from hospitals, schools and markets; assisting victims; educating the public on risk; assisting internally displaced persons; supporting political stabilization efforts; and restoring essential services and infrastructure in affected areas. United Nations deployments had also adapted to the evolving nature of conflicts.

6. Nonetheless, while the recent reduction in anti-personnel landmine casualties was commendable, it was also important to note that the United Nations had recorded a 40 per cent increase in casualties from landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The international community must avoid complacency and focus on fostering stronger partnerships and closer cooperation with all stakeholders, supported by predictable, timely and — where possible — multi-annual financial contributions. Those efforts would yield extraordinary returns on investments: lives would be saved, communities rebuilt and countries put back on track towards social and economic development and sustainable peace.

7. **Mr. Diaz Carazo** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the European Union was united in its collective commitment to the goal of a world free of the threat of anti-personnel mines. All 28 Members were State Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and all European Union States had co-sponsored the resolution of the General Assembly on assistance in mine action.

8. The European Union and its member States contributed over one third of the world's financial assistance to mine action, making it the leading donor. Assistance from other international actors could increase the impact of that support. The international community needed to reinforce partnerships among States, the United Nations, the African Union, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and relevant nongovernmental organizations.

9. He welcomed the draft resolution on assistance in mine action (A/C.4/72/L.12) and called for it to be adopted by consensus. That resolution was vital in reaffirming the normative framework for United Nations humanitarian mine action activities. His delegation was pleased that the humanitarian dimension of the draft resolution had been strengthened and that the specific needs of refugees and internally displaced persons were taken into account. The European Union also welcomed the streamlining of the resolution, the enhanced clarity of its terminology, the recognition of the contribution of mine action to the 2030 Agenda, and the call on Member States to comply with international obligations related to mine action.

10. **Mr. Winid** (Poland), introducing the draft resolution, said that its main purpose was to express support for mine action carried out by the United Nations, Member States and other organizations all over the world. He expressed gratitude to the sponsors of the draft resolution and acknowledged the constructive contributions of all delegations involved in the consultation process.

11. The draft resolution reflected current trends in mine action, which included decreasing deaths and injuries from anti-personnel mines but increasing casualties from explosive remnants of war and IEDs. In addition, the terminology used in the draft regarding explosive devices had been streamlined to improve clarity and strengthen the humanitarian dimension of the text. For the first time, the draft resolution called on Member States to comply with their respective international obligations related to mine action. It also took note of the contribution of mine action to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the mine action efforts undertaken by various stakeholders worldwide.

12. In recognition of the twentieth anniversary of both the Mine Ban Convention and the creation of UNMAS, he congratulated UNMAS on its important work and acknowledged the substantive contributions of the Director of UNMAS, Ms. Agnès Marcaillou, and her team of experts, to the consultations on the draft resolution. He also thanked the Secretariat of the Fourth Committee for its professional guidance during the consultations, and concluded by expressing the hope that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

13. **Mr. Devahastin Na Ayuthai** (Thailand) said that mine action was an essential cross-cutting component of the work of the United Nations. His delegation commended the Organization on the progress made under the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013–2018, particularly in terms of risk education, and expressed confidence that implementation of the strategy, based on a person-centred approach, would continue to yield meaningful and lasting outcomes.

14. As one of the first countries to ratify the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in 1999, Thailand remained committed to the goal of a zero-victim and mine-free country. Over the previous two decades, his Government had made comprehensive and sustained efforts to meet its obligations under the Convention, and had voluntarily contributed 10,000 Swiss francs per year between 2016 and 2019 to support progress under the Convention. The Thailand Mine Action Center had cleared over 2,100 square kilometres of contaminated land in 16 years, making significant progress with the Land Release technique, and was committed to completing the clearance of the remaining 430 square kilometres of hazardous areas as soon as possible. Thailand called on all States to support its proposal to extend the mine-clearance deadline, to be considered at the Sixteenth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention in Vienna in December 2017.

15. In line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the country's mine victim support programmes were integrated into the legal framework for persons with disabilities and implemented through a universal health-care coverage scheme. The Government of Thailand had worked closely with local villages and schools to promote mine risk education, and during its 2016 chairmanship of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration, the country had spearheaded development of the Guidance on Victim Assistance Reporting under the Convention and advocated translation of the Guidance into French and Spanish.

16. Thailand, which had applied for membership of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance under the Mine Ban Convention for the 2017–18 period, was a firm supporter of collective

efforts to end the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines and achieve a world free from the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war.

17. **Mr. Elshandawily** (Egypt) said that his delegation offered its deepest condolences to the Government and people of the United States for the cowardly terrorist attack that had taken place the previous day in New York, and to the respective Governments and peoples of Argentina and Belgium, whose citizens had reportedly been affected by the attack.

18. Egypt, which had over 20 per cent of the world's landmine total, was fully aware of the humanitarian ramifications associated with the production, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines and had applied a voluntary moratorium on their transfer to any other State since 1984, and on their production since 1988. It continued to advance its international mine action cooperation efforts, including in the context of UNMAS. The Egyptian Government had made substantial efforts to clear landmines in affected areas of the country, including the north-western region of El Alamein, but lacked access to the advanced detection and clearance technologies required for swifter progress on mine clearance. The Government of Egypt therefore called for international cooperation and assistance to enable Egypt to obtain the technological equipment needed to clear the millions of landmines in the country, which not only posed a serious threat to Egyptian citizens residing in affected areas, but also obstructed economic, industrial, agricultural and social development.

19. While having engaged constructively in the negotiations leading up to the signing of the Mine Ban Convention, the delegation of Egypt regretted that the final text had fallen short on several of Egypt's key concerns, in particular the failure to acknowledge the responsibility of States to remove landmines placed in Egyptian territory and the inclusion of an overly short timeframe for demining which would have been difficult for a country such as Egypt to achieve.

20. **Mr. Samounty** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the international community and United Nations system had carried out commendable and crucial work towards reducing the threats posed by the explosive remnants of war. In his country, millions of munitions dropped during the Indochina war continued to kill and maim innocent people, as well as hindering social and economic development. Many more resources were therefore needed not only to remove those remnants, but also to carry out public awareness campaigns and provide assistance to victims.

21. Since the mid-1990s, his Government had been engaging in multilateral cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other development partners to clear unexploded ordnance. It had also worked with non-governmental organizations and private companies, and engaged in bilateral cooperation with such countries as the United States, Japan, Norway, China and India to address the issue of unexploded ordnance through surveys, clearance, mine-risk education, victim assistance and training.

22. His delegation expressed gratitude to all donor countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations for their support, assistance and cooperation in mine action and hoped that such assistance would continue, so as to promote the social and economic development of his country and contribute to implementation of global development initiatives, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

23. **Mr. Mizumoto** (Japan) said that his delegation conveyed its deepest sympathies to all innocent civilians maimed or killed by explosive hazards, and paid tribute to the courage and professionalism of all those working in the demining field. Japan strongly supported the draft resolution and hoped that it would be adopted by consensus.

24. Despite significant advances in the implementation of the Ottawa Treaty since its momentous signing in 1997, expanding global security crises and diversification of explosive devices meant that the explosive-hazards threat was far from declining; in particular, urgent measures were needed to tackle the issue of IEDs, currently the main cause of landmine casualties in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

25. Combined with the adoption of Security Council resolution 2365 (2017) and the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Mine Ban Convention, the draft resolution offered an opportunity for new impetus in collective mine action efforts. As a cross-cutting component of humanitarian activities, successful mine action was a prerequisite for peace, security and sustainable development; for that reason, Japan had set mine action as one of its diplomatic priorities. Japan's contribution of $263 million to international mine action efforts between 2011 and 2015 was the second largest in the field, and it had also worked closely with the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Demining as part of its mine action efforts in the Middle East and Africa.

26. The Government of Japan advocated triangular cooperation, comprehensive victim support, risk education, gender mainstreaming and the fostering of a

broad range of partnerships as key factors in promoting effective mine action, and was satisfied that all those elements were well acknowledged in the draft resolution. Japan would continue to play an active role in mine action, with a view to achieving the goal of a mine-free world by 2025 as pledged in the Mine Ban Convention.

27. **Mr. Schulz** (Germany) said that the Mine Ban Convention had enabled significant progress on mine action over the past two decades: 51 million anti-personnel mines had been destroyed; global stocks were now under 50 million; the trade in industrially manufactured anti-personnel mines had practically come to a halt; 41 States had completely ceased production of anti-personnel mines, including four which were not States Parties to the Convention; and the number of States Parties to the Convention had increased from 122 to 162.

28. During its presidency of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2016, Germany had focused on developing country-specific strategies and initiating dialogue with countries that had yet to sign the Convention. Proud to be one of the world's largest contributors of funding for humanitarian mine action, his Government had increased its annual contribution to €32 million in 2016, but recognized that much work was still required to dispose of the contamination left not only by historic conflicts, but also current conflicts in countries including Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Ukraine. As the latter contamination largely consisted of IEDs, including improvised landmines and booby traps, Germany was pleased that the draft resolution noted the central role of humanitarian mine action in dealing with that contamination in post-conflict settings, and would continue its support for humanitarian mine action and its efforts to universalize the relevant treaties and conventions.

29. **Mr. Grant** (Canada) said that much work remained to be done to achieve the goal of a mine-free world by 2025 as set at the Third Review Conference of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, held in Maputo in 2014. In addition to the considerable contamination left over from previous conflicts, new contamination continued to be created, in large part by non-State actors who often used improvised anti-personnel mines with complete disregard for humanitarian principles and the value of human life. In addition to the casualties they caused, such weapons hindered people from returning to their homes and rebuilding their communities following a conflict.

30. Canada strongly supported an evidence-based approach that responded effectively to the needs of affected populations and prioritized gender equality and inclusion; particular account should be taken of the specific barriers to recovery and integration faced by vulnerable groups such as women and girls, and persons with disabilities, including survivors of anti-personnel mines.

31. For its part, Canada had contributed $17.5 million to mine action in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Ukraine, and ensured that each of its mine action programmes was tailored to local needs and implemented in a gender-balanced manner, for example by employing gender-balanced community liaison teams and training local women as part of clearance crews. All international efforts to address mines and explosive remnants of war must be sensitive to issues of gender and diversity and geared towards rebuilding societies and enabling sustainable peace.

32. **Mr. Abbani** (Algeria) said that in view of the lethal devastation that anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war could cause, and based on its firm historical commitment to disarmament and international humanitarian law, Algeria had ratified the main international instruments relating to mine action, including the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons).

33. To comply with its international obligations under the Mine Ban Convention, in September 2017 Algeria had begun the final stage of the destruction of its remaining stockpile of 5,970 anti-personnel mines which had been kept for training purposes; it had also implemented a victim assistance action plan which had been endorsed by 11 States Parties to the Convention. Using its own domestic capacity, Algeria had destroyed approximately 9 million mines and cleared over 62,000 hectares of contaminated agricultural and grazing land between 1963 and 2016, as well as carrying out development programmes in the affected border areas of the country. It had also launched a range of projects focusing on treatment, assistance, education, empowerment, and social and professional integration for mine survivors and their families, and supported civil society organizations working in the mine action field. Measures taken to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also helped to protect persons with disabilities, guarantee their rights and tackle discrimination to enable them to integrate into society. He expressed the hope that the efforts of

Algeria in that regard would encourage other countries to work towards the collective goal of a mine-free world as set out in the Mine Ban Convention.

34. The report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine action (A/72/226) contained the worrying statistic that the number of victims of mines and explosive remnants of war — many of them civilians — had increased by 40 per cent between 2015 and 2016 as a result of the rising number of conflicts around the world, particularly in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Algeria welcomed the efforts of the United Nations and its partners to protect civilians, including through the 2016 UNDP initiative to strengthen livelihoods and reduce poverty through mine action, and to coordinate with Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society to strengthen victim assistance programmes. Such programmes should be extended to more countries and affected areas, the technical assistance components needed to build the capacity of States and help them implement the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

35. His delegation welcomed the progress achieved to date in implementing the June 2017 memorandum of understanding between the African Union and UNMAS, adding an institutional dimension to international cooperation in mine action, particularly in implementing the African Union Mine Action and Explosive Remnants of War Strategic Framework 2014–17. Algeria also welcomed the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/72/226) regarding the contribution of mine action to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and called for integrating mine action in peacebuilding efforts and humanitarian assistance in countries where mines and explosive remnants of war posed a danger to citizens.

36. His delegation supported the draft resolution, in particular its strengthening of the humanitarian dimension of mine action. Thanking the delegation of Poland for their efforts in preparing the draft resolution, he also commended UNMAS and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines for their efforts in the mine action field.

37. **Mr. Ben Zitun** (Libya) said that despite the efforts of his Government to demine the country, Libyans continued to be killed and maimed by mines and explosive remnants of war left behind not only by the brutal Italian occupation of Libya and a series of historical proxy wars waged on Libyan soil, including the Second World War, but also by the current war in Libya, in which mines had killed more civilians than armed combatants.

38. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the United Nations to promote mine action in Libya — including by educating the inhabitants of Sirte about the dangers of mines following the city's liberation from terrorist control, providing specialized technical assistance to the Libyan authorities in Sirte, and helping to clear the Ibn Sina hospital of mines and restore its operation — and hoped that such assistance would continue, as mines and explosive remnants of war still covered large areas of agricultural and grazing land in and near Sirte. Libya also commended UNMAS on its work in Benghazi, where civilians, including women and children, were still at risk from mines and explosive remnants of war following the city's bitter fight against terrorism.

39. Because modern technological advances had made IEDs — including those produced on Libyan soil — more horrifyingly lethal than ever before, his delegation called for a detailed United Nations report on technological developments used in IED production, so as to help Member States prevent loss of life through mine-clearance activities. While welcoming the extensive support already provided to Libya by the United Nations in the mine action field, his delegation called for increased coordination among UNMAS, the Libyan authorities and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), and for adequate technical support to promote mine clearance, awareness-raising and mapping of areas contaminated by mines and the explosive remnants of war.

40. **Mr. Hamadi** (United Arab Emirates) said that his delegation welcomed the observations and recommendations contained the report of the Secretary-General (A/72/226) and endorsed its emphasis on civilian protection, humanitarian assistance and the return of displaced persons to their homes, and on the potential of mine action to prevent conflict and build peace and trust.

41. His Government had supported several regional and international mine action initiatives as part of its humanitarian and development work, contributing $50 million to a mine-clearance programme and participating in demining and public education efforts in Lebanon, as part of a post-war reconstruction project in collaboration with the Lebanese army and UNMAS, and had also contributed $27.8 million to demining projects in Kandahar, Afghanistan, improving citizen safety, facilitating the return of displaced persons and restoring land to agricultural use.

42. The United Arab Emirates had also participated in international mine action meetings, including the First International Pledging Conference for the Implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Fifteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, both held in 2016, and would continue to work with its regional and international partners, including the United Nations, to protect civilians and dispose of landmines and explosive remnants of war.

43. **Mr. Huang Da** (China) said that international cooperation in the mine action field should be tailored to the specific needs of affected countries, geared towards capacity-building to reduce countries' dependence on external assistance, and designed to achieve tangible results through mine-clearing activities; new approaches for international cooperation should also be explored.

44. China faithfully fulfilled its obligations under Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and was an active member of the Group of Experts of the High Contracting Parties under the Protocol. As a former mine-affected country, China fully understood the problems and had been operating a long-term, systematic international demining programme since 1998, providing assistance to nearly 40 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America in the form of financing, equipment and training. China would continue to cooperate closely with all parties and make further contributions to resolving the humanitarian concerns caused by landmines.

45. **Mr. Gallhofer** (Austria) said that while the Mine Ban Convention had achieved remarkable results to date and fundamentally changed perceptions of disarmament by focusing on civilian protection and the humanitarian benefits of mine action, his delegation was deeply concerned by reported recent use of anti-personnel mines in Myanmar, which was not a State Party to the Convention. As current President of the Convention, the Government of Austria had asked the Government of Myanmar for clarification and to consider receiving an international fact-finding mission to investigate the matter.

46. Worrying trends had also emerged, such as the high number of mine casualties recorded in 2016, largely as a result of the increasing use of IEDs. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the Mine Ban Convention, Austria urged the international community to work with renewed zeal towards the goal of achieving a world free of anti-personnel mines by 2025. Noting that the traditional draft resolution on the implementation of the Convention (A/C.1/72/L.40) had been adopted the previous day in the First Committee of the General Assembly, he called on States to adopt draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.12 by consensus as in previous years.

Draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.12: Assistance in mine action

47. **The Chair** invited the Committee to take action on draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.12, which had no programme budget implications.

48. **Ms. Marcaillou** (Secretary of the Committee) said that Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Peru, Republic of Moldova, Thailand and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

49. *Draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.12 was adopted.*

The meeting rose at 11.32 a.m.